

ourselves the admonition of the gentlewoman from Texas. We have to find a way.

This is our way. Not everyone may understand what it is. They may be going up and down the television and see what is going on. This is called Special Orders. Special Orders means the regular business of the House, that is to say the scheduled business of the House, is completed for the day. This is our opportunity as Representatives, this is the opportunity of the 435 of us, who have had the faith and trust of our constituents placed in us, to come to the floor and engage in a dialogue not just with ourselves, but with the American people. Because part of the difficulty has been is the American people are watching this on television, or reading it in the newspaper, participating, if you will, at a distance, as to what is taking place, unless and until, of course, it hits you full force because a loved one has been hurt or harmed or killed, or someone that you know has had that experience. So it happens sporadically, and, from the point of view of the cosmos, indifferently around the country at various times.

So we are here on the floor, and I might say to those tuning in, we are here on the floor of the House of Representatives, surrounded by the galleries. In fact, our good friend the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. COSTELLO), the distinguished gentleman from Illinois has a group of his constituents in this gallery right now observing our proceedings.

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He is explaining to them as we are speaking now what it is we are doing on the floor here. It does not matter that the Chamber is not filled right now.

We spent our time this afternoon naming post offices. I was happy to do it. A good friend of mine had one of the post offices named after him. I was pleased to cast my vote for it. A wonderful opportunity to show our expression of what we would say in Hawaii is "aloha" for our good friend and others. We were happy to do that.

But our business here in these Special Orders is to engage the American people as best we can with that which we have before us. And as the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. COSTELLO) now is talking with his constituents here in the gallery, this is the freedom granted to us by the Constitution that we need to take advantage of, that we were obligated to take advantage of.

So the regret to me is, as the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. COSTELLO) no doubt has pointed out, right behind me here is the press gallery. Empty. Night after night empty. Now, maybe they can say, well, they are watching on television, if they care to.

But who wants to pay attention to Special Orders? Well, I will tell my colleagues what happens in Special Orders. Not just this kind of discussion, but my good friend, the gentleman

from Michigan (Mr. SMITH), night after night engaged in a conversation on the Social Security trust fund, what it takes to make the Social Security trust fund.

In fact, he just walked in right now. That is synchronicity. I did not know he was coming. Did my colleague happen to hear what I had to say? I do not know whether the cameras are on us or not. But the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) has just come in.

I cite him as an example, as a prime example of someone who has faithfully come to the floor to explain his position on the Social Security trust fund, the implications of it for our country. That is the kind of thing that needs to be done. That is what this is about.

This Iraq Watch that we have faithfully committed ourselves to since the beginning of our concern that this war was going off on the wrong track, that this was taking place, that is why we are here. That is why I appreciate the gentleman yielding. I appreciate the fact that our good friend, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. COSTELLO), and his constituents have observed us this evening, have seen democracy in action.

I am here to tell you as far as this gentleman is concerned, that I am going to take advantage of this opportunity that we have here on the floor and continue to exchange in the kind of dialogue that I hope will illuminate the issues of our day so that we can get a resolution on behalf of these brave men and women who are serving our country.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE), for joining us and thank my friend, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE), in closing so the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) can have his time to talk about his concerns.

I go back to something that I mentioned earlier in this time together and that is the fact that this very night we have young soldiers and middle-age soldiers in Iraq driving around in Humvees that are not armored. It puts them at greater risk. This problem can be solved much more quickly than the Pentagon is willing to solve it.

I talked to a radio personality back in my district today and she said, "Congressman, what can the people listening do about this?" I said, "Call the White House. The message ought to be this: Mr. President, provide our soldiers with armored Humvees as quickly as possible because life and limb are at stake."

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURNS). The Chair must remind Members to avoid improper allusions to visitors in the galleries.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND GOING DEEPER INTO DEBT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for the time remaining until midnight as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, as the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) said, yes, we have had many conversations about Social Security including the stealing of the extra trust fund surplus that has been coming in. We have never been quite square with the American people.

I would yield to my colleague.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to join the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH). As one can see, the aura that he exudes when he comes to speak about Social Security must have been so powerful that the rays literally leapt out and said to me, say that the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is coming.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I think that the people of Hawaii are still wide awake and listening to this debate.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to comment tonight not only on Social Security but what I consider a huge challenge for this country, and that is going deeper into debt and increasing the spending of the Federal Government and sacrificing the increased burdens of that increasing debt in addition to the kind of high taxes that it takes to accommodate this kind of spending and this kind of servicing of the debt.

The first chart I have is a pie chart that I wanted to sort of show how the Federal Government is spending \$2.4 trillion. And we see the largest piece of this pie is Social Security, spending 21 percent of all Federal spending; and that is going up.

In 1983 we had the Greenspan Commission that gathered together because Social Security was going broke, and what they decided is to dramatically increase taxes, payroll taxes, our FICA taxes, for Social Security and at the same time reduce benefits. And that is the challenge for Social Security, that is the challenge for Medicare, that is certainly the challenge for Medicaid, the three major programs where Members of Congress have continued to make promises over and above far beyond our ability to pay for them in the future. And that is the problem with extra pressure on increasing taxes and increasing debt on these kind of unfunded liabilities.

We see the other pieces of the pie. Defense is 20 percent; 2 years ago it was 19 percent.

Interest. Look at this issue of interest on the debt. It is now 14 percent of total spending. Within 6 to 8 years that amount of the piece of pie that interest consumes servicing this increasing national debt is probably going to double.

Now, interest rates right now are almost at record lows. We know that interest rates eventually are going to increase. And so increasing interest rates